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A
DISCOURSE
UPON
The BEING of GOD:
AGAINST
ATHEISTS.

In Two Sermons,

Preached in the CHURCH of

St. James, Westminster,

March the 7th, and April the 4th, 1763.

At the LECTURE founded by the Honorable
ROBERT BOYLE, Esq;

By RALPH HEATHCOTE, D. D.

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DISCOURSE

THE KING OF GODS

AND HIS KINGDOM

OF THE LIVING

AND THE DEAD

AND THE WORLD

AND THE FUTURE

AND THE LAST

To His GRACE
The ARCHBISHOP of CANTERBURY,
And His GRACE
The DUKE of DEVONSHIRE,
TRUSTEES for the LECTURE, founded by
the Honorable ROBERT BOYLE, Esq;

MY LORDS,

THOUGH it might justly be thought
impertinent to trouble your Graces,
and at the same time to encumber the
public, with a bulky volume upon the sub-
ject of the BOYLEAN Lecture; — upon
which so much has been already said, that
scarcely any thing remains to be said; —
yet I have ventured to lay before you a

single Discourse, with which I trust your Graces will not be offended. The *Matter* of it has been long exhausted; but if there shall be any thing in the *Manner*, which may answer the pious intention of the Honorable Founder, and the good opinion your Graces have conceived of me, it is all I propose to myself: except the honor of declaring publicly, with what zeal and devotion I am,

MY LORDS,

Your GRACES most obliged

and humble Servant,

Ralph Heathcote.



ROMANS I. 20.

The Invisible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.

THE Being of GOD is the fundamental article of all Religion: so very fundamental, that no Superstructure whatever can be raised without it. Religion is a system of duties, which we, as dependent created Beings, owe to an independent supreme Creator; and flows directly from the relation between him and us. A Supreme Creator therefore is essential to Religion; and to contend for Religion without admitting such a Being, would be to act as

A 3 absurdly

absurdly as *Epicurus*, who wrote a book *Upon Piety*, after he had in effect denied him. (a) This corner stone then of Religion must be laid firm and sure, in the first place : the great, the important truth must be established, not upon fallacious and sophistical arguments, but upon the clearest and soundest deductions of Reason ; if indeed the deductions of Reason are necessary. I say, if the deductions of Reason are necessary ; because I am not sure, that they are. I am not sure, that the existence of a Creator is not intuitive knowledge : I am however firmly persuaded, that it is at most but one remove from it.

THE Atheist in the mean time, far from allowing the existence of GOD to be intuitive knowledge, denies that it can be collected even by rational deduction ; and certain mistaken Divines, who mean honor to Revelation by dishonoring Reason, have, in this particular,

(a) At etiam liber est Epicuri de *Sanctitate*. Ludimur ab homine non tam faceto, quam ad scribendi licentiam libero. Quæ enim potest esse *Sanctitas*, si Dii humana non curant ? *Cicero. de Nat. Deor.* l. 44.

fided

fided with the Atheist; have maintained, with him, the utter impossibility of finding out such a Being by any use or exercise of our Rational Powers: for which however they offer the most trifling, the most ridiculous arguments. "The knowledge of GOD, says one of them, was not obvious to the senses; and therefore could not have entered into the mind to conceive." (b) Now this objection was made formerly by Epicurean Philosophers, but doubtless refuted with great solidity by the Stoics; who replied, as we learn from Tully, that *God is as knowable by his works, as the Mind by its operations, tho' neither the one nor the other be obvious to the Senses.* (c) "There is no chain of Causes and Effects," says the same Divine, that "can lead the mind from the

(b) *The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason and Nature*, pag. 95. By JOHN ELLIS, D. D. 1747. 8vo.

(c) *Mentem hominis, quamvis eam non videas, ut Deum non vides, tamen ut Deum agnoscis ex operibus ejus, sic ex memoria rerum, & inventione, & celeritate motus, omnique pulchritudine virtutis, vim divinam mentis agnoscito. Tusculan. Quæst. I. 28.*

“contemplation of the Creature to the
 “knowledge of the Creator.” (d) But,
 alas! instead of a chain, it is only one
 link. The knowledge of G O D is, I say,
 but one remove from intuitive knowledge,
 or (as some have thought) not even that :
 for, as an ancient writer asks, *is it not as
 easy to know God, who created all visible
 things, as to know the things themselves?* (e)

B U T not to anticipate our matter. We
 may say of this, as of all great and fun-
 damental truths, that it is the most sim-
 ple or least complicated; that the objec-
 tions, or rather cavils raised against it,
 are not only fewer, but weaker also; and
 that little more is requisite to procure
 assent to it, than to clear away every thing
 which obscures or disguises it, and to
 present it fairly and fully to view. No
 operose argumentation, no cumberfom ap-
 paratus of reasoning is necessary to prove

(d) ELLIS, p. 99.

(e) Τον Θεον, ὃ ταδε πάντα ἐργα τε καὶ γιννηματα,
 ἀρα ὁμοίως εὐπετές καταμαθεῖν αὐτοῦ τε καὶ τὰ ποιη-
 ματα; Themist. in Orat. Prima περὶ Φιλανθρωπίας
 ad Constant.

the

the existence of G O D. We need not climb up into Heaven, nor descend into the Earth, nor cross over the Seas, to seek him: and the reason is, because he is always present with *every one of us*: because *in him we live, move, and have our being.* (f) — My present purpose therefore, which is to prove the existence of a Supreme Eternal Being, shall be executed under these divisions :

FIRST, I will take into consideration certain arguments, which have been employed to prove the existence of such a Being, but which yet appear to be fallacious and sophistical.

SECONDLY, I will shew, how the existence of such a Being may be demonstrably and incontestably proved.

THIRDLY, I will refute the objections, some of them at least, which have been brought against this greatest and most important of truths.

(f) Acts xvii. 27, 28.

I. I will first consider certain arguments, which have been employed to prove the Being of G O D, but which yet appear to be fallacious and sophistical. — It is the more reasonable to explode these false proofs, if indeed they shall be found false, since true proofs are at hand, and those of the strongest kind : and it is not only reasonable, but even necessary ; for what greater injury can be done to Truth, than to call in Error and falsehood to the support of it ? May not a true proposition suffer by false reasonings, as a good character suffers by evil vouchers ? and will not the one, as well as the other, by these means become suspected ? Just so, with regard to this clearest and simplest of all truths, the existence of G O D. Lay it but open, let it be but fairly and fully contemplated, and men however perverse can scarcely cavil : it is so firm, so round, so well compacted in itself, that all the artillery of sophistry will make no impression. But defend this clear and simple truth with scholastic and thorny disputation, and you will perplex and obscure it at once ; as
you

you would perplex and obscure the clearest and simplest ideas, by any attempt to explain them: and by thus perplexing and obscuring it, give the Atheist the very advantage he wants, and the only advantage that can serve his cause. He cannot attack the truth, as it stands of itself: but when error is interwoven, and become as it were a part of it, he can then attack it, or can seem at least to attack it, by attacking the error; and although he cannot overturn or even weaken, he can certainly disgrace it, and so weaken its influence, by weakening its conviction, in the minds of men. In short, as the ivy supports the oak or the ash it entwines, just so false arguments support true propositions: that is, instead of supporting, they gradually corrupt and undermine what indeed supports them. — On this account I have thought it reasonable, before I prove the Being of God, to explode those arguments which do not prove it: for by removing these, the great truth will stand forth upon its genuine and natural foundation; and that alone will abundantly support it.

THE

THE FIRST of those fallacious and sophistical proofs, as I conceive them to be, is drawn from the simple idea of GOD; first supposed in the Understanding, and then alledged for the truth and reality of his existence. *Des Cartes*, the inventor or rather reviver of this argument, for it had been used by the Schoolmen, pretended to prove it this way by nothing less than mathematical evidence; though all he hath said amounts only to this: *God or a Perfect Being includeth Necessary Existence in his very Idea, and therefore God is.* (g) Yet this hath been thought sufficient, and the argument adopted by eminent Divines, who have maintained with *Des Cartes*, that “the Idea of
 “GOD upon the Mind of Man is not merely
 “a fictitious Idea, but really imprinted there
 “by that GOD, whose Idea it is; and there-
 “fore doth suppose a reality in the Thing,

(g) Omnino est concludendum ex hoc solo quòd existam, quædamque idea Entis perfectissimi (hoc est, DEI) in me sit, evidentissime demonstrari DEUM etiam existere: — fierique non posse, ut existam talis naturæ qualis sum, nempe ideam DEI in me habens, nisi reverà DEUS etiam existeret. *Cartesii Meditationes de Prima Philosophia. Medit. Tert.* Amst. 1654. 4to.

“COR-

“ correspondent to that objective reality, which
 “ is in the Understanding.” (b) But whoever
 hath adopted it, nothing certainly can be
 more fallacious; and *Cudworth* himself, tho’
 he hath endeavored to make the most of it,
 is yet forced to own it “ of a *thin and subtle*
 “ kind, and unable to support the weight of
 “ *so great a truth.*” (i)

IT is built upon two assumptions, the first
 of which is false; and if the second be not
 false too, as I think it must appear to be, it
 is at least precarious and uncertain. *Des*
Cartes assumed, first, that he had in his
 mind a clear and distinct Idea of an infi-
 nitely perfect Being; and, secondly, that this
 Idea has an objective reality, as he calls it,
 or, in plainer terms, a real object, which may
 be known by the Idea without farther proofs:
 from which premises he concluded, that an
 infinitely Perfect Being exists, and is the
 cause of this Idea which represents him-
 self. (k) Now that such a Being exists, may
 be, and has been, demonstrated invincibly:

(b) *Stillingsfleet's Origines Sacrae*, Book III. Chap. I.
 § 6.

(i) *Intellectual System*, pag. 725. edit. 1678.

(k) *Bolingbroke's Philosophical Works*, Fragment I.

but to say, that he is the object of a clear and distinct Idea, is surely to say something, which every man may contradict. He cannot even become such by any reasoning whatever; yet is here supposed such antecedently to all reasoning. But he is falsely supposed such; the question is manifestly begged; and if love of paradox had permitted this Philosopher to contemplate the true state of his Understanding, this clear and distinct Idea, for the sake of which he excluded the genuine and solid proofs, would have been found nothing but "a mere nominal Idea, Definition or Notion, which he himself had framed in his own Mind, and which had no reference to any Real Particular Being, actually existing without him." (1)

To say then, that we have a clear and distinct Idea of an Infinitely Perfect Being, is to say something which is false: but, if it was true, and we really had such an Idea in the Mind, it would not follow, as *Des Cartes* supposes, (m) that this Idea has an objective

(1) Clarke, *Upon the Being and Attributes of God*, pag. 20. edit. 1732.

(m) Videor pro regulâ generali posse statuere, illud omne esse verum, quod valde clare & distincte percipio.
Meditatio Tertia.

reality, or real object, existing without it; unless it were first proved, that we have certainty of knowledge, whenever we have clear and distinct Ideas. But our Ideas are often clear and distinct, and at the same time fantastic; and we can all of us frame ideas, clear and distinct ideas, of Centaurs, Mermaids, and a thousand other Chimeras, that never were, nor ever will be. In the same manner, could we frame in the Mind a clear and distinct Idea of an Infinitely perfect Being, it would not follow from thence, that such a Being really existed without the Mind: it would only follow, that as our Idea implied no contradiction in it, such a Being might exist, or that it was not impossible for such a Being to exist; but not, that such a Being did actually exist. (n)

SHOULD it be said, indeed *Des Cartes* has said it, that " Necessary Existence is included in the Idea of an Infinitely Perfect Being, being one of his perfections, and

(n) If it should be alledged, that *Des Cartes* supposed the Idea of God not framed by the Mind, but originally implanted in it, the Answer may be found under the Consideration of the *second* fallacious Proof of God's Existence.

" that

“ that therefore the Idea and the Existence
 “ are inseparable from each other ; ” we re-
 ply, that the Idea of such a Being doth
 indeed include in it Necessary Existence, but
 that in the present question both the Idea
 and the Existence are supposed, not proved.
 And doubtless the truth of the whole matter
 lies here : Men rise, *a posteriori*, from clear,
 sensible and solid proofs, to what they call
 the Idea of such a Being, as if they meant
 the Idea of his Essence, though it is really
 nothing more than the Idea of his Existence ;
 and then, unconscious perhaps how they have
 risen to it, infer *a priori* the existence from
 the Idea. But if this Idea be attained only
 by arguments deduced *a posteriori*, then it
 is only a consequence of these arguments,
 and cannot itself be alledged as a distinct
 one. For, as hath been justly asked upon
 this occasion, “ how can any Idea, conse-
 “ quent upon certain proofs of something *a*
 “ *posteriori*, be an antecedent, independent
 “ proof of the same thing *a priori* ? (o)
 This well deserves attention : for the same
 error, I presume, will be found to lurk under

(o) Law's *Notes upon King's Origin of Evil*, pag. 56.
 edit. 1739.

other celebrated arguments for the Being of G O D, drawn from our ideas.

T H E S E C O N D proof of G O D's Existence, which I reckon among the precarious and inconclusive proofs, is built upon the Universal Consent of Mankind. All the Ancients and all the Moderns, till very lately, have sounded this high : yet a few words may serve to shew, that nothing convincing or decisive can be drawn from it. This proof manifestly rests upon the same foundation with the former; and both of them upon the supposition, that the Idea of G O D is innate or connatural to the Mind of Man. But it is generally agreed, that there are no Innate Ideas in the Mind, or nothing in the Understanding, but what entered through the Senses; (*p*) and if there are, the Idea of G O D is evidently not among them. For if an Idea of G O D is implanted in the minds of all men, then all men must not only be exceedingly sensible and conscious of this Idea, but this Idea must also be the same in all men. For to assert an

(*p*) Locke's *Essay upon Human Understanding*, Book I.

Idea, without being conscious of an Idea, is to assert knowledge, and not to know at the same time; and to assert an indelible Idea of GOD, and yet this Idea not the same, is to assert, not an Idea of one and the same GOD, but Ideas of innumerable and different GODS, in the minds of men.

BUT are either of these things so? *first*, are all men conscious of the Idea of GOD? No body, I think, can answer in the affirmative. Navigators and Missionaries tell us of whole nations abroad, among whom was to be found no Idea of GOD: and if we will not believe Navigators and Missionaries, though I know no reason why we should not believe them, we need but cast our eyes upon the desert and uncultivated corners of our own land; where we shall find Human Creatures enough, who have either no ideas at all of GOD, or Ideas worse than none. Thus the Idea of GOD is far from *Universal*, since there are many who have it not: but, *secondly*, is it *Uniform* among those who have it? Is it, I mean, the same Idea? Nothing is more certain, than that it is not. Some have low and unworthy ideas of GOD, are literally Anthropomorphites, that

that is, make him no better than an huge and mighty man; while others entertain absurd and contradictory ideas of him: for it is not their agreeing in a name, a sound, or even in an opinion of such a Being, which can constitute a sameness of Idea. Neither Universality therefore nor Uniformity belong to this Idea of GOD, as it is found in the minds of Men: but as both these in a strict sense are necessary to form an Universal Consent, so it is plain, that the existence of GOD can in no wise be deduced from any such consent.

IN the mean time let it be remembered, that though this consent is not universal enough to evince the existence of GOD, yet it is general enough to shew the proportion, which this truth bears to the Universal Reason of mankind; and (which is the thing, I am preparing the way to prove) that every man, who makes the least use of this Reason, may attain it with the utmost clearness and certainty.

A THIRD fallacious proof of the Being of GOD, and the last I shall mention, is deduced from the ideas of Immensity and

Eternity, or the Infinites of Space and Time: and it runs in these terms. “ Im-
 “ mensity and Eternity are Ideas, which we
 “ cannot destroy or remove, and therefore
 “ must be Modes or Attributes of some Be-
 “ ing actually existing: for to suppose, that
 “ there is in the Universe no Being, no
 “ Substance, in which these Attributes or
 “ Modes of Existence necessarily inhere, is
 “ a contradiction in terms; since Modes and
 “ Attributes exist only by the existence of
 “ the Substance, to which they belong:” (q)
 and thus the conclusion follows, that there
 is an Immense and Eternal Being. This
 argument is concise; it has also the ap-
 pearance of accuracy and precision; and for
 these reasons perhaps we may wish it to be
 solid: but let us examine it.

“ IMMENSITY and Eternity are Ideas
 “ which we cannot destroy or remove.”
 Much Metaphysics and subtlety of reason-
 ing have been employed about the Ideas
 of Space and Time: to determine, whether
 these ideas have real objects existing with-
 out, or be nothing more than Modifica-

(q) Clarke, *as above*, p. 16, 21.

tions

tions of the Mind. The patrons of this argument say, real objects without; because of our inability to destroy or remove these Ideas. But this inability has been, and may be, questioned: for it has been asked, how is Space necessary to the Mind and its Operations? and what becomes of Time, when we remove the Idea of Succession? (r) — But to wave this very profound disquisition; let us own these ideas to have their objects, and Space and Time to be really something without us: what will follow then? why then, it is said, that considered as “Attributes or Modes of some Being actually existing, they imply the existence of such a Being, as of a Substance, without which Attributes or Modes cannot exist.” The division or distinction of Substances from Modes and Attributes has been readily admitted, and carries with it somewhat of plausibility in the Sound; yet after all has perhaps no foundation in Nature. It is certain that many have understood, and indeed it seems most

(r) King's *Origin of Evil*, with Law's *Notes*, pag. 40, 67, &c.

reasonable to understand, nothing more by Substance, than all the Attributes, Modes, or Qualities taken together; and then Substance, separately considered, becomes a mere Non-Entity. — But let this also pass; let Space and Time be Realities, Modes or Attributes, if you please: yet how will it follow, that they can be Modes or Attributes of Existence (I believe I might say, to any Being whatever; but, I only say) to the Supreme Being? We suppose the Deity, and we justly suppose him, to be distinct from Matter, and infinitely above it: but the Ideas of Space and Time, as they are manifestly derived from Matter, so they seem to refer only to Matter and its Modifications. Space may be considered, if you will, as the receptacle of all Material Bodies; and Time as appertaining to Beings, who think, like us, by a Succession of Ideas, and hence are led to measure Duration by dividing it. But how are these necessary to a Being, who wants no receptacle of Existence, like Matter; and who, far from a succession of Ideas, is rightly conceived to have the Past, the Present, and the Future,

Future, before him at once? and if not even *necessary* to such a Being, how in any possible sense *Modes* or *Attributes* of him?

THE fundamental error in this argument seems plainly, very plainly, to flow from hence. Men first suppose GOD's manner of existing, and GOD's manner of thinking, so to speak, to be the same with that of his Human Creatures; and then reason about them from Human Ideas. It is certainly no wonder, that they reason wrong. The Schoolmen are the last persons to be called in, when a point wants to be cleared; their talents having been formed to perplex and obscure, and not to clear: and yet I can better agree with the Schoolmen upon the present question, when they conceive the *Immensify* of GOD to be a *Point*, and his *Eternity* to be an *Instant*, than I can with those, who presume to explain what his Immensity and Eternity are. The Schoolmen, it is true, give me no idea at all of GOD's manner of existing; but then they represent it as very different from, and far transcending, that of his Creatures, and thus speak and

think with reverence of the Deity : while they, who attempt to explain it as above, may be thought to treat him somewhat irreverently, by degrading him to the idea of mere Material Existences, and thus preparing men to become at length Anthropomorphites.

THE illustrious and excellent Divine, who invented, at least who perfected, this argument upon the ideas of Immensity and Eternity, being told upon a time, that even a nettle, or the like contemptible weed, furnished a better proof of the Existence of GOD, than any Metaphysical reasoning whatever, confessed very candidly the thing to be so ; but alledged, that, since such philosophers as *Hobbes* and *Spinoza* had employed these subtleties against Religion, he thought it useful to shew, that the same subtleties might also be employed on the side of Religion. (s) Did the excellent person think, that the fool was to be answered according to his folly ; and that the way to do this was,

(s) Mr. *Whiston* relates this in his own *Memoirs*, and was himself the person, who objected to the Metaphysical proofs.

to

to confront objections without meaning, with refutations that had as little? But whatever might be his meaning, which was indisputably pious; nothing can be more certain, than that the best and indeed only Demonstration of GODS Existence must be established upon the solid foundation of Matter of Fact; and when the Divine has so established it (*a posteriori*) from the visible Creation, he may securely leave the Atheist to reason against it (*a priori*) from his Ideas.

HAVING thus considered and exploded the fallacious and sophistical proofs of the existence of GOD, I come, in the second Place,

II. To shew, how his existence may be demonstrably and incontestably proved. — Now, to take the matter as deep, and to proceed with as much order, as may be, let us begin with observing, that our own existence is the first thing that occurs, and which I presume may be laid down as a certainty: for surely more than enough scrupulous was the French Philosopher, who thought it necessary to frame
an

argument for the truth of his own existence. " I think, says *Des Cartes*, " and therefore am." (t) Might he not have said just as well, " I am, and therefore think ? " It is true indeed, that by *thinking* I know that I *am* : but then the ideas of *Thinking* and *Being* present themselves at the same instant ; so that as soon as I know the one, I know the other also. The Philosopher has shewn here, what will always be found true, that Intuitive knowledge cannot be made more intuitive, nor self-evident truths still more evident, by Logic and Argumentation. Logic and Argumentation may indeed, as we see they often do, obscure and disguise such knowledge and such truths ; but they never add strength and light to either. But to proceed.

OUR own existence, I say, is the first thing that occurs ; and yet the first only, in the order of our ideas ; for the visible creation occurs at the same time. A great and stupendous system of Being presents itself to our Intelligent Minds : we con-

(t) *Cogito, ergo sum.* Medit. Secunda.

template

template this system : we ask, whence it proceeds, and who hath formed it ? for we see nothing in the Whole, or in any of the Parts, endued with active original power, with a power (if I may so say) of forming itself. We know, at the same time, or at least we may know, that this system thus formed, or something prior that formed it, must have existed from all eternity : since if ever, in any point of Duration, there had been Nothing, there must for ever have been Nothing ; for Being could not have been produced without a producer, because then it would have been produced absolutely by Nothing. Something therefore has existed from Eternity : can the Visible Creation be that Something ? Certainly not : for what is the Visible Creation ? It is plainly a system of Generations and Corruptions, regularly and mechanically succeeding one another, devoid of original active power ; and is in truth so far from being a Cause, that it is nothing more than a chain of effects, which continually refer us to something higher and farther, till we come at length to a first Cause of all things. I say, till
we

we come to a first cause of all things : for to affirm, as some have affirmed, that these effects may want no cause, because they may infinitely succeed and depend upon each other, is as absurd as to affirm, that a single effect requires a cause, but that an infinity of effects requires none : whereas Infinity makes no difference in the case, except that the absurdity becomes infinitely greater.

IN this manner we arrive at a first original Cause, which we call GOD ; and it is in this manner only, that we are able to arrive at it. Innumerable writers, Philosophers as well as Divines, have well and fully proved the Being of GOD ; but they have all of them proved it thus : and the argument, however diversified in Form by each, is as to Substance the same in all. “ That some things now
 “ are, saith *Grotius*, which have begun
 “ to be, is acknowledged by all. But
 “ those things were not a cause of ex-
 “ istence to themselves ; for what does
 “ not exist, cannot act. It follows there-
 “ fore, that they have derived their origin
 “ from something else, and that some-
 “ thing

“ thing else from something more remote ;
 “ till we come at length to a cause, which
 “ hath never begun to be, which is (what
 “ we call) necessarily existent, and which
 “ finally we mean by the name of GOD.”

(u) This is *Grotius's* manner of proving
 GOD's existence: the excellent *Clarke*
 hath proceeded thus: “ Since something
 “ now is, 'tis evident that something al-
 “ ways was; otherwise the things that
 “ now are, must have been produced out
 “ of nothing, absolutely and without
 “ Cause: which is a plain contradiction
 “ in terms. For, to say a thing is pro-
 “ duced, and yet that there is no cause
 “ at all of that production, is to say that
 “ something is effected, when it is ef-
 “ fected by Nothing; that is, at the same
 “ time when it is not effected at all. He
 “ concludes therefore, that since some-
 “ thing must needs have been from Eter-
 “ nity, either there has always existed
 “ some one unchangeable and independent
 “ Being, from which all other Beings

(u) De Veritate Religionis Christianæ, Lib. 1. 2.

“ have

“ have received their original ; or else
 “ that there has been an infinite succession
 “ of changeable and dependent Beings,
 “ produced from one another, in an end-
 “ less progression, without any original
 “ cause at all :” (w) and after confuting
 this latter very foolish supposition, more
 particularly than it deserves, asserts the
 one immutable and independent Being.

IT is remarkable that Mr. *Hobbes*, al-
 though reputed an Atheist, hath given a
 just and solid proof of the Being of GOD.
 “ There is, says he, a GOD : for the ef-
 “ fects we acknowledge naturally, do in-
 “ clude a power of their producing, before
 “ they were produced ; and that power
 “ presupposeth something existent, that
 “ hath such power ; and the thing so
 “ existing with power to produce, if it
 “ were not eternal, must needs have been
 “ produced by somewhat before it, and
 “ that again by something else before that,
 “ till we come to an eternal (that is to
 “ say, the first) power of all powers, and

(w) *On the Being and Attributes of GOD*, pag.
 8—13.

“ first

“ first cause of all causes : and this it is,
 “ which all men conceive by the name
 “ of GOD.” (x) I will add one proof
 more from the late Lord *Bolingbroke* : for
 I think it of use to shew, that they, who
 have dissented from us upon almost every
 other point, have yet concurred with us
 in this great and fundamental one. “ Since
 “ there must have been something from
 “ eternity, says his Lordship, because there
 “ is something now, the Eternal Being
 “ must be an Intelligent Being, because
 “ there is Intelligence now ; for no man
 “ will venture to assert, that non-entity
 “ can produce entity, or non-intelligence
 “ intelligence : and such a Being must exist
 “ necessarily, whether things have been
 “ always as they are, or whether they have
 “ been made in time ; because it is no
 “ more possible to conceive an infinite,
 “ than a finite, progression of effects with-
 “ out a cause. And thus,” says the no-
 ble Lord, “ the existence of a GOD is
 “ demonstrated.” (y)

(x) *Moral and Political Works*, pag. 25. Lond.
 1750. folio.

(y) *Philosophical Works*, Essay I. sect. 1.

HERE you have several proofs of the Being of GOD, and it were easy to bring others, from men, widely differing in principle and profession: all of which, however unlike and various in manner, are yet actually the same in substance. They are indeed but one and the same proof; and though it is common to speak of proving the Being of GOD from the works of the Creation, *from the faculties of Human Souls, from the structure of animate bodies, and from the origin and frame of the world,* (z) as if these different topics furnished different proofs; yet the proofs arising from them are in no wise different, but only different illustrations of one and the same proof. In one case we reason from the whole system taken together, in the other from Parts of it separately considered: but our reasonings in both are built upon the just and necessary relation between cause and effect. — Nor need we be alarmed, that the proof of GOD's existence is thus simple and one: for it is this simplicity and unity, which

(z) In the Title of Dr. Bentley's Boylean Sermons.

makes it the strongest of all proofs; and the thing to be proved the greatest of all certainties, that depend upon proofs. Intuitive knowledge neither requires, nor admits of, proofs; yet intuitive knowledge is the certainest of all knowledge. The next certain knowledge is that, which requires the least proving, or the shortest chain of Rational deduction: and as nothing, but our own existence, requires a shorter than the Being of GOD, so nothing is more certain than the Being of GOD, except the knowledge of our own existence.

I ventured to doubt, in my entrance upon this subject, whether the knowledge of GOD's existence was intuitive knowledge, or whether the deductions of reason were necessary to ascertain and establish it? for it seems to me, that we can no more contemplate the Creation, without associating the idea of a Creator, than we can contemplate an Orrery or any curious piece of Mechanism, without associating the idea of a Mechanic. It is indeed possible, and I suppose often happens, that volatile men may not attend

to, or stupid men may pore without reflecting on, either the Creation or the Orrery : but whoever contemplates, with his Understanding, as well as with his Eyes, if he does not behold the Creator in the Creation, and the Mechanic in the Orrery, directly, yet he must perceive both the one and other immediately by reflection : and this reflected knowledge, though it cannot indeed be called intuitive or direct, is something at least extremely like it, since it can hardly be thought acquired by Rational deduction. However, if in strictness we have not intuitive knowledge of the existence of God, we have intuitive knowledge of those few intervening ideas, which connect it with the knowledge of our own existence : and therefore he, who denies the existence of God, is almost (if not altogether) as absurd, as he who denies his own existence ; since they are the shortest of all removes from each other. — I come now to the third general head, *viz.*

III. To refute the objections, some of them

them at least, which have been brought against this greatest and most important of truths: — I say, some of them; for it would be tedious, as well as useless, to refute them all. A specimen will suffice to shew, what I chiefly mean to shew, that there is no truth, how firmly soever grounded, but men may at least appear to oppose, while they do really nothing less than oppose it.

1. It has been said then, in the first place, that “GOD not being subject to “the senses, we can have no idea, nor “consequently any evidence of the existence, of such a Being.” This objection has been mentioned already, and is here repeated; not because there is really weight in it, but because Divines have treated it as if there was. *Hobbes* had said, in the last Century, that “what- “ever we know, we learn from our “phantasms (or Ideas), but there is no “phantasm (or Idea) of infinite, therefore no knowledge or conception of “it:” and *Hobbes’s* Religious principles being justly suspected, this was taken as an argument against the Being of GOD.

But I cannot perceive, that it was so intended; nor is there any reason from the thing itself, whatever there might be from the character of *Hobbes*, to conclude that it was. For what? will any man contend, that he has a phantasm or idea of Infinity? This Idea (I mean what we call such) is acquired by adding finites to finites: yet when we have tired our imaginations with adding, we are just as far from an idea of Infinity, as when we began to add. But suppose we have no idea of Infinity, or of an Infinite Being, does it follow from thence that we cannot prove the existence of such a Being? Surely not. We have no idea at all, nor are our Minds able to comprehend in the least, how any thing can have existed from Eternity, or, as one expresses it, "how an eternal duration can be now actually past:" (a) yet the fact may be demonstrated, even Mathematically. When *Cudworth* therefore conceded, that "whatever is unconceivable is Nothing, or Non-entity," (b)

(a) Clarke, *on the Being*, &c. pag. 9.

(b) *Intellectual System*, pag. 638.

he gave force to an objection, if *Hobbes* really meant it such, which had none before ; and unregardedly betrayed the cause of Theism, while he was employed in defending it. But he was under no necessity of making this concession, and the cause of Theism should have restrained him from making it. No mortal man, not *Cudworth* himself, was ever able to conceive, *what* GOD is : but men, far inferior to *Cudworth*, have not only conceived, but demonstrated too, that GOD *actually* is. We cannot penetrate the essence of the Deity, as we cannot penetrate the essence of any *created* substance : but we can prove the existence of the Deity, as clearly as we can prove the existence of any thing whatever ; I do not except even the existence of ourselves.

2. Another objection to the Being of GOD is built upon the supposed impossibility of creating Matter ; which supposed impossibility led *Spinoza* to conclude, that “ there is nothing in the Universe but
“ Matter and the Modifications of Mat-
C 3 “ ter.”

“ter.” (c) The Creation of Matter has always been denied by Atheists: yet for no other reason, I suppose, than because it cannot be conceived by the Human Mind. But grant the Creation of Matter, out of Something which is not Matter, to be (as indeed it is) inconceivable by us; was Matter therefore not created? We must not argue so, because we can demonstrate the certainty of things, although we cannot conceive the things themselves: for we can demonstrate, as I have shewn, an eternal first cause of all causes, although we can attain no idea of Eternity, nor even of a first cause, existing of itself, and absolutely uncaused. — Go farther still: let the Creation of Matter be not only inconceivable, but, if the Atheist pleases, impossible too; that is, in other terms, let Matter be Eternal: yet it is easy to shew, as it has been often shewn, that Matter cannot be

(c) *Una Substantia non potest produci ab alia Substantia. — Præter Deum nulla dari neque concipi potest Substantia. Ethic. Par. I. prop. 6, 14. By Deum he understands the Matter of the Universe.*

the

the Original, Independent, and Supreme Being, in Opposition to an All-governing Mind, which is the notion of God. When we contemplate the Matter of the Universe, we discern nothing in it like spontaneous thought, or active power: on the contrary, it appears to be perfectly passive: and all its various Phænomena to rise, not from Intelligence or a self-moving principle, but merely from deadness and inactivity. In short, the more it is contemplated, the more it discovers itself to be an Effect; and was accordingly so considered by some Philosophers of old: who, while they asserted Matter to be eternal, asserted it only as an Eternal Effect, proceeding from an Eternal Cause. And this shews the folly of *Spinoza* in maintaining, that there is nothing in the Universe but Matter, or that “every thing in the World is God”: which includeth in it this plain contradiction, that the Effect is made the same thing with the Cause.

I have not mentioned this objection, if it can be thought such, with a design to

confute it in form; (d) but purely to remark once for all, that we must ever reason impertinently, when we presume to reason beyond our ideas and our knowledge. And is it possible to set this impertinence and licentiousness of reasoning more strongly to view, than in the present question upon the nature of Matter? where it is well known, that while some like *Spinoza* contend, that there is nothing in the Universe but Matter, others contend like *Berkeley* (e) that there is no such thing as Matter: both of them, doubtless, with equal plausibility and force of reason.

(d) There is the less occasion to confute it in form; since the dispute between us and the Materialists seems to be, rather about the Nature, than the Existence of God. For, while *Spinoza* ascribes to Matter Eternity, Self-existence, Omnipotence, Intelligence, and nearly the same Attributes, which we ascribe to the Invisible and Adorable Father of the Universe, he may be said (if he will speak with Philosophical precision) not so much to deny God, as to entertain false, corrupt, and imperfect notions of him.

(e) See *Berkeley's Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, printed first in 1710, and reprinted in 1734. 8vo.

3. THESE are Metaphysical arguments against the Being of GOD: there are others, called Moral. For instance, it hath been pretended formerly, that "Fear made GOD, and that all our notions of such a Being arose primarily from this passion:" (f) and this pretence, for want of a better, hath been revived by modern Atheists. Now, that we may be as short as possible upon trifles, let this fear be readily granted; and let it be, as the Atheist pretends it is, Universal: what can be fairly deduced from hence? nothing surely, but that mankind have a natural fear or dread of an Invisible Power: which, though some may maintain to be a *Prolepsis* or anticipation in the Mind of such a Power, (g) that is

(f) *Præterea cui non animus formidine Divum Contrahitur, &c.* Lucret. V. 1217. & VI. 49.

(g) *Epicurus* for form's sake admitted GODS, and grounded their existence upon this very *Prolepsis*. *Vidit primum esse Deos, quod in omnium animis eorum notionem impressisset ipsa Natura. Quæ est enim gens, aut quod genus hominum, quod non habeat sine doctrina anticipationem quandam Deorum? quam appellat ωροληψιν* *Epicurus, id est, anteceptam animo rei quandam informationem.* Ciceron. de Nat. Deor. l. 16.

an inward sense or feeling of its existence, previous to reasoning, yet none can offer as the least presumption against it; since the existence of this Power is exactly where it was, whether mankind have fear of it, or not. This universal fear then of a Deity is either pretended, or it is real: if pretended, the objection is void; if real, it is plainly a Natural passion. As such indeed, it may justly be thought a Means to stir up Reason, and to push this faculty on to the discovery of G O D's existence; but can never be urged as an argument against it, by men who know what arguing is.

4. O F the same importance is that other trite objection, *namely*, that "the notion of G O D was invented by Legislators and Politicians, for the sake of keeping mankind in subjection and obedience." It is remarkable, that an ancient writer, although a Sceptic, yet could not forbear to ask upon this occasion, and surely very properly, *how came the Politician by the notion of God?*

God? (b) But the cavil is foolish in the highest degree. For (first) Politicians have consulted, as they must ever consult, the present state of Affairs, and the humor of the times, in which they lived. Instead of inventing therefore and obtruding what was wholly new and unheard of, they more wisely accommodated and applied, what they found already invented and received: and far from opposing prevailing passions and prejudices, by the introduction of novelties, were better employed in directing these passions and prejudices, and in making them *means* to accomplish *ends*. They have acted thus in the serious and important affair of Religion; which, without regard to its Truth, has by Politicians been made Useful to Government. It was so particularly by *Numa*, when he delivered to the

(b) Φάσιν ὅτι νομοθεταὶ τινες εὐεποίησαν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὴν περὶ Θεῶν δοξάν, μὴ εἰδότες ὅτι τὸ ἀρχήν αὐτοῦ περιμελεῖ ζήτησαντι αὐτῶν, ποθεν δὲ οἱ νομοθεταὶ, μηδενὶ πρότερον παραδόντι αὐτοῖς Θεός, ἦλθον εἰς ἐπινοσίαν Θεῶν; Sextus Empiric. advers. Mathem. p. 314.

Romans

Romans his commissions from *Egeria* :
(i) but if the Religious Passion (so let me call it) had not prevailed among that people, — if the Romans had neither known nor been influenced by Religion, the Legislator had sought his imaginary Goddess to little account. Is this enough to shew, that Politicians were not the inventors of God and Religion? — But if it is not; if *(secondly)* Politicians did first conceive the notion of God, for the sake of applying it to the purposes of Government, what then? why then, Politicians hit (for, I suppose, it was fortuitously) upon a notion, which was afterwards proved by argument to be a great and fundamental truth; and which must ever continue as much a Truth, as if Politicians had never hit upon the Notion.

You may perceive, that I run these objections over, without dwelling upon them; and, in truth, to dwell upon them would be waste of time and labour. Enough, I presume, has been said to refute them; or rather to shew, that they are

(i) Livii Hist. Lib. I.

not

not objections, and do not deserve to be refuted. And this is more than is incumbent upon me: for when a truth is once established, objections and cavils, be they ever so numerous or plausible, avail nothing at all. You may answer them, if you please; but it will be matter of courtesy: your cause does not require it. For instance, I know by intuition, the surest way of knowing, that Matter exists: an acute and ingenious disputant, such as *Berkeley*, may conceive it to good purpose to argue against this existence: he may lead me through subtleties and Metaphysical abstractions, which, although they are not Sense, shall look at least like Sense: and, in short, by the help of Logic and Fantastic Ideas, may so perplex and puzzle me, that perhaps I cannot answer him. But what can be inferred? The existence of Matter will continue all the while, as real, yea, and I shall be as certain of it, as if a *Berkeley* had never dreamed of calling it into question. And thus it is in the case before us; Divines demonstrate, mathematically demonstrate, the Existence of a Supreme,
Eter-

Eternal, All-perfect Being: the Atheist cavils and objects; and, though he cannot overturn the demonstration, raises (as he thinks) doubts and difficulties. But are doubts and difficulties to prevail against Demonstration? Does not the Demonstration remain as firm and unshaken, as if the doubts and difficulties had never been raised? Surely it does: and though the Atheist should continue to cavil and object, as long as Logic and Fantastic Ideas can enable him, yet the Divine is in no wise obliged to listen to him.

HAVING said what I proposed upon GOD's Existence, the order of things leads me to the consideration of his Attributes: which I mention the rather at this time, because in strictness the proof of GOD's existence is scarcely compleated, untill his Attributes be also proved. The Existence of a *First Cause* has indeed been fully proved: but Attributes seem included in the idea of GOD, such as Intelligence, Free-Agency, Power, Wisdom, &c. Of these therefore, and the rest, at future opportunities.

F I N I S.

Written by the Reverend Dr. HEATHCOTE.

1. *THE Use of Reason asserted in Matters of Religion; or, Natural Religion the Foundation of Revealed.* Occasioned by a Sermon preached before the University of Oxford, by Dr. PATTEN.
2. A Reply to Dr. PATTEN's Defence of his Sermon: being a second Part of the *Use of Reason*, &c.
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4. *Morality and Religion essential to Society.* An Affize-Sermon upon *Micab. vi. 8.*
5. *Fidei Fundamentum Ratio.* Concio habita apud Academicos Cantabrigienses Julii 4. 1759, pro gradu Doctoratus in Sacra Theologia.

Written by the Rev. and Dr. H. A. H. H. H.

1. THE UP of Religion in the
of Religion: or, Natural Religion the
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